

Castro Agrees To Discuss Fate Of 23 Americans

MIAMI, Fla., Dec. 25 (AP).—The survivors of the Bay of Pigs invasion spent Christmas in freedom today with the promise of another present to come.

The 1,113 men were flown here in a 10-plane, two-day

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mission that ended in the waning hours of Christmas eve. A main feature of Christmas Day for the former captives was a holiday dinner of "lechón" (roast suckling pig) with loved ones they hadn't seen since the invasion failed 20 months ago.

Meanwhile, 1,000 relatives of the prisoners prepared to board an American ship in Havana harbor to come to the United States as political refugees.

Castro's "Christmas Bonus"

Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro called that a "Christmas bonus."

And Mr. Castro promised also "to discuss the early release of the 23 American prisoners" still in Cuban jails.

He made the pledge to James B. Donovan, the New York lawyer who negotiated the swap of the Cuba invasion prisoners for \$53 million worth of medical supplies and baby food.

The two-day exchange was a mixture of agonized waiting, as the return sputtered fitfully with long delays between planes, of unashamed tears, of husbands introduced to children they had never seen, of emotion-charged reunions with mothers, fathers and friends.

And more reunions are to come.

Leave Tomorrow

Relatives of some of the prisoners are expected to leave Havana tomorrow aboard the African Pilot, which carried to Cuba Sunday the "down payment" on the ransom.

The African Pilot will make the 12-hour run with the women and children to Port Everglades, about 30 miles north of Miami.

President Kennedy, whose administration was involved in the negotiations to return the prisoners and the raising of the ransom through contributions from American companies, hailed the completion of the operation.

"This Christmas will be a little brighter for all Americans because these men are being united with their loved ones," Mr. Kennedy said at the Winter White House in Palm Beach, Fla.

Last Planeload

Mr. Kennedy's statement was read at Homestead Air Force Base, on the outskirts of Miami, as the last planeload of prisoners pounded down the ramp to freedom, shortly after 9:30 last night.

Aboard the craft was a trio of men who led the volunteer brigade of some 2,000 in the abortive invasion.

They were Jose Perez San Roman, the military commander; Ancido Oliva, second in command, and Manuel Artime, a member of the Cuban Revolutionary Council.

Mr. Donovan also was aboard. He was the last man to leave the plane. Solemnly he paced between rows of saluting Air Force enlisted men.

A Tired Donovan

Mr. Donovan, who helped secure the freedom of U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers in exchange for Russian Spy Rudolph I. Abel, compared dealing with the Soviets and the Cubans this way: "I was tired when I got through with both."

Mr. Donovan was sunburned from the long hours spent at the San Antonio de los Baños air base near Havana, where he supervised the prisoners' airlift.

"I have not had time for a bath in one week," he said. But

he was obviously buoyed by the successful fulfillment of his long negotiations.

He told of watching the first flight of captives take off Sunday:

"Just watching the first plane take off made it all worth it. It was like the slave trade. All they lacked were the chains. It really choked me up."

Didn't See Americans

Mr. Donovan said he personally had not seen any of the American prisoners "but from Cuban prisoners I heard they are not being more harshly treated than the others."

The negotiator said he was hopeful the Americans' release would be relatively early.

The 23 American prisoners are serving terms up to 30 years for alleged counter-revolutionary crimes committed at various times since Mr. Castro took over in Cuba.

The attorney said he mentioned to Mr. Castro Sunday that the "African Pilot was going back light."

Consents to Petition

"I asked him if he would object to hearing a petition of the prisoners' mothers to get on the freighter," he said. "Fidel consented and told me he was giving me a bonus."

The freighter will go to Florida, discharge passengers, pick up more ransom material and return to Havana, he said. He indicated that if all the 1,000 women and children approved to come to the United States cannot be accommodated on the first sailing, they will sail on the second trip of the freighter.

Mr. Donovan said 3,500 Cubans had applied to make the trip, and Cuban and United States authorities had selected the 1,000 to board the African Pilot.

List of Materials

The final list of materials to be sent to Cuba for the prisoners embraced:

Drugs and pharmaceuticals, \$23,263,000.

Surgical, dental and veterinary instruments, \$6,872,000.

Powdered milk, \$9,365,000.

Baby foods, \$14 million.

The broad list of drugs included aspirin, insulin, hormones, blood anticoagulants, sulfa drugs, anesthetic drugs of all kinds, anti-malarials, anti-diarrhetics.

Color Adopted By Cubans

Men and women all over Cuba have adopted yellow as a mark of opposition to the Castro regime and make it a point to wear something yellow, regardless of how inconspicuous, at all times, the Cuban Family Committee said.

Among the greeters in the first group was Juan Figueras, 24, who lost both legs during the invasion.

The amputation took place in Cuba before his release. He has just completed a rehabilitation course in New York and has been walking on his artificial legs for about two weeks.

He found his brother Wilfred, 22, in the first group. Their greeting was one of tears, kissing and back slapping.

Luise Morse, Jr., who lost his hand, found his father on the second plane.

Donovan Due Back

The three with \$500,000 ransoms on their heads were supposed to come back on the last plane load with James B. Donovan, the New York attorney who completed the negotiations for the prisoner exchange.

The three \$500,000 prisoners were Jose Perez San Roman, the military leader, Manuel Artime, the political leader, and Eneido Aliva.

The ransoms ranged from \$25,000 to \$500,000. Those valued at \$25,000 to \$50,000 each by Castro were kept at Principe Prison in Havana. The men valued at \$75,000 to \$100,000 were kept at the Isle of Pines.

A total of 1,197 prisoners was captured by Castro forces during the April invasion. Of the original group, 60 were returned as wounded men; 6 were ransomed by their families; one died in prison, 9 were jailed and sentenced for other crimes, and